



OLR RESEARCH REPORT

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ANALYSIS OF SHB 5350, AN ACT CONCERNING ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL LITERACY BY GRADE THREE

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You asked for an analysis of sHB 5350, An Act Concerning Achieving Universal Literacy by Grade Three.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the State Department of Education (SDE) to create a new state-wide reading program. It establishes new requirements for SDE, local and regional school boards ("boards"), and teachers to implement the program and sets a new standard regarding K through third grade reading. Under the program, a student who is deficient in reading must receive supplemental instruction. A student who does not achieve a satisfactory score on the third grade reading portion of the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) must be held back from promotion to fourth grade, with certain exceptions. Boards must take a number of steps regarding these students, including requiring them to complete a mandatory intensive summer school reading instruction program.

The bill does not define "satisfactory." The CMTs are scored at five achievement levels: below basic, basic, proficient, goal, and advanced. It is not clear what level would meet the satisfactory standard.

The bill also has provisions regarding:

1. school districts that over-identify minority students for special education,
2. additional professional requirements regarding reading for teachers and administrators, and
3. developing incentives for teachers that demonstrate improvement in student reading.

The bill makes technical and conforming changes. It is effective July 1, 2012 and applies to school years beginning July 1, 2013 and each following year.

The bill was referred to the Appropriations Committee, which reported it out on April 3 with substitute language that removed the third grade hold back requirement and a number of related provisions including the supplemental instruction and mandatory summer school for some students. The substitute language instead expands an existing early literacy pilot program so it applies to more schools. The Appropriations Committee substitute keeps the provisions (1) requiring SDE to develop or approve new reading assessments, (2) regarding districts that over-identify minority students for special education, and (3) regarding teacher professional development in reading. The bill will have a separate analysis when it is printed in file copy.

K THROUGH THIRD GRADE READING PROGRAM (§ 1)

The bill requires SDE to develop and implement, by July 1, 2013, a coordinated state-wide reading program for students in K to third grade that contains research-driven strategies and frameworks to produce effective reading instruction and improvement in student performance. Boards must implement this program for the school year beginning July 1, 2013, and each following school year. Under the program any third grade student who does not achieve a satisfactory reading score on the CMT must be held back from promotion to fourth grade, with some exceptions.

The SDE program must require:

1. the alignment of reading standards, instruction, and assessments for K through third grade students;

2. teachers to use student progress data to adjust and differentiate instruction to improve student reading success;
3. the collection of information about each student's reading background, level, and progress for teachers to use to assist in a student's transition to the next grade level;
4. an intervention for each student who is not making adequate reading progress to help the student read at the appropriate grade level;
5. enhanced reading instruction for students reading at or above their grade level;
6. reading instruction coordination between parents, students, teachers, and administrators at home and school;
7. school district reading plans, as described in the bill;
8. parental involvement by providing parents and guardians with opportunities to help teachers and school administrators to (a) create an optimal learning environment and (b) receive updates on their student's reading progress;
9. teacher training and reading performance tests to be aligned with teacher preparation courses and professional development activities;
10. incentives for teachers and schools that demonstrate significant student reading improvement;
11. research-based literacy training for early childhood care and education providers and instructors working with children birth to age five;
12. reading instruction alignment with the common core state standards that the State Board of Education (SBE) sets; and
13. any student who is held back because he or she did not receive a satisfactory reading score to complete an intensive summer school reading program and an intensive accelerated reading class, as described in the bill.

SCHOOL DISTRICT READING PLANS AND PLAN MONITORING (§§ 2 & 3)

As part of the program, boards must develop and implement a school district reading plan. The bill requires the plan to include several elements and details how boards must monitor their plans. The bill repeals a similar requirement under current law for all boards to craft reading skills plans for students in grades K through three ([CGS § 10-221h](#)).

The district reading plans are required, starting with the 2013-14 school year, to indicate at a minimum how:

1. reading data will be collected, analyzed, and used for purposes of instructional development;
2. professional development will be related to reading data analysis and used to support individual teacher needs;
3. the district will communicate with parents and guardians on reading instruction strategies and student reading goals, and on opportunities for parents and guardians to help teachers and administrators improve reading at home and at school;
4. teachers will be trained in the science of teaching reading;
5. the plan will be monitored at the school and classroom level, as required by the bill (see below); and
6. the district will incorporate leadership, curriculum and instruction, professional development, and student assessment to improve student reading performance.

The bill requires each school board to annually monitor the district reading plan implementation at the school and classroom level to improve it. As part of the monitoring, the bill requires boards to, at a minimum, determine whether the reading curriculum, strategies, and interventions are achieving the plan's student performance goals.

The school board must submit an annual report to SDE that includes (1) the results of the reading plan monitoring and (2) an explanation of the student reading assessments it used and how student reading performance data will be collected and how often it will be analyzed.

NEW STATEWIDE READING ASSESSMENTS (§ 5)

The bill requires SDE to develop or approve a reading assessment that districts must use to identify K through third grade students who are reading deficient and thus require supplemental reading instruction so that they may obtain a satisfactory CMT reading score.

The bill requires the assessment to:

1. include frequent student screening and progress monitoring;
2. measure phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension;
3. provide opportunities for periodic formative assessment during the school year;
4. produce data that is useful for developing individual and classroom instruction; and
5. be compatible with best practices in reading instruction and research.

SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION, REMEDIATION PLANS, AND PARENTAL NOTIFICATION (§ 4)

Starting with the 2013-14 school year, the bill requires school boards to provide supplemental reading instruction to students in grades K through three who are identified as reading deficient. Furthermore, when a child is identified as reading deficient the district must (1) develop a reading remediation plan for each student, and (2) notify his or her parent or guardian (a) that he or she has a reading deficiency, (b) what the school district plans to do, and (c) that the student will not be promoted to fourth grade if he or she does not achieve a satisfactory score on the third grade reading CMT.

The supplemental instruction must be provided during regular school hours in addition to the regular reading instruction period and be aligned with the student's remediation plan.

The bill requires each student's remediation plan to address and correct his or her reading deficiency. It must include (1) alternative instructional strategies that use research-based reading instruction materials and teachers trained in reading instruction, (2) parental

involvement in the plan's development and implementation, and (3) regular student progress reports. The plan may include an extended school day, an after school reading program, Saturday sessions, an extended school year, or transitional classes.

The bill requires the school principal to notify the parent or guardian of any student in K through grade 3, who has been identified as reading deficient under the bill's assessment.

The notice must be in writing and:

1. explain why the student is reading deficient;
2. inform the parent or guardian that such student will receive supplemental instruction and a remediation plan will be developed to provide the student with supplemental reading instruction, including strategies for the parent or guardian to use at home; and
3. include a statement that if the student is deficient in reading at the end of grade three and cannot achieve a satisfactory score on the reading component of the CMT, that the student will (a) not be promoted to grade four unless such student meets one of the bill's exceptions and (b) be enrolled in an intensive summer school reading program.

FOURTH GRADE PROMOTION WITHHELD FOR STUDENTS NOT ACHIEVING A SATISFACTORY READING SCORE (§ 6)

With certain exceptions, a student who does not receive a satisfactory score on the third grade CMT reading test cannot be promoted to fourth grade and must complete an intensive summer school reading program and enroll in an intensive accelerated reading class.

Under the bill, a student may be promoted to fourth grade if he or she:

1. is a limited English proficient student who has received less than two years of instruction in an English language learners program,
2. receives special education and his or her individualized education program (IEP) states that the grade reading test is not appropriate for the student,
3. demonstrates an acceptable level of performance on an alternative standardized State Board of Education-approved reading assessment,

4. demonstrates through a student portfolio that he or she is reading at an acceptable grade level,
5. is a student with disabilities whose IEP indicates that he or she has received intensive reading remediation for more than two school years but is still deficient in reading and who has been held back in K or grades one through three, or
6. is a student who has received intensive reading remediation for two or more years but still demonstrates a deficiency in reading and who has been held back in K or grades one through three at least twice.

In any of the above scenarios, the student's teacher must also recommend to the principal that promotion is appropriate based on the student's record. Any student promoted to fourth grade through one of these exceptions must receive additional reading instruction during the school day. The instruction must be based on special diagnostic information and include specific reading strategies.

Summer School Reading Program

Any student who is held back from fourth grade because he or she did not receive a satisfactory CMT third grade reading score must be enrolled in an intensive summer school reading instruction program. The program must include:

1. a comprehensive reading intervention program,
2. scientifically-based reading research strategies and interventions,
3. curricula, and supplemental and intervention materials that were not used during the previous school year,
4. diagnostic assessments administered before or during the program to determine the student's instructional needs,
5. teachers who are trained in teaching reading and reading assessment and intervention,
6. weekly monitoring to assess the student's progress and tailor his or her instruction, and

7. the opportunity for the student to retake the CMT reading component at the conclusion of the summer school program and to be promoted to fourth grade if he or she receives a satisfactory test score.

Intensive Accelerated Reading Class

The bill requires that an intensive accelerated reading class be designed to improve the reading level of each reading deficient student who was held back.

The intensive reading class must include:

1. a reduced student to teacher ratio;
2. a 90-minute period of uninterrupted reading instruction during the school day;
3. opportunities to master fourth grade standards in other core academic subject areas;
4. a scientifically-based reading research program that has proven results in accelerating student reading achievement within the same school year;
5. intensive language and vocabulary instruction using a scientifically-based reading research program and a speech and language therapist;
6. weekly student progress monitoring;
7. personalized teaching strategies and methods tailored to the particular needs of the student;
8. a teacher trained in reading instruction; and
9. at least one of the following instructional options: (a) before or after school tutoring, (b) parent workshops and a parent-guided home reading program, (c) a mentor or tutor with specialized reading training, (d) extended school day programs, or (e) supplemental educational services.

Any student who completes the intensive accelerated reading class but does not receive a satisfactory score on the reading component of the CMT may be placed in a transitional instructional setting. This setting must be individually designed for the student to help him or her achieve fourth grade performance standards.

Each board must report to SDE on the reading progress of the students in the accelerated reading class and the specific reading interventions and supports instituted as part of the accelerated class. Progress for the students in the class must be based on the data collected using the bill's reading assessments.

Certain Promotions

The bill contemplates promotions to fourth grade that may take place when a student who initially fails to meet the standard later meets it after certain interventions. The bill specifies that a student who fails to receive a satisfactory score on the reading component of the CMT may be eligible for promotion to fourth grade when he or she:

1. completes the summer reading program and receives a satisfactory CMT reading score before beginning to repeat third grade, or
2. receives a satisfactory CMT reading score during the student's repeat year and demonstrates proficiency in fourth grade reading skills.

BILL COMPARED TO CURRENT LAW REGARDING READING DEFICIENCIES IN EARLY GRADES

Table 1 below compares certain provisions of the bill to existing state law that addresses reading deficiencies in early grades. The existing law applies to priority school districts, while the bill would apply to all districts. It is not clear how the bill could be applied in priority districts that already must comply with the existing law. There are 15 priority districts in the state, based on those with the greatest academic need as determined by statute.

Table 1: Reading Deficiencies in Early Grades

Description	sHB 5350	Current Law (CGS § 10-265g)
Districts Affected	All	Priority Districts
Students	Grades K through 3	Grades K through 3
Assessment to determine Reading Deficiency	Third grade CMT reading test and other ongoing assessments in earlier grades	Determined through SBE-established measures, based on middle of year or end of year evaluation.
Parental Notification of Reading Deficiency	Yes	Yes
Required to Attend Summer School Reading Program	Yes	Yes
Mandatory Hold Back of Reading Deficient Students	Yes, those who do not score satisfactorily on third grade CMT reading	Yes, only for students deficient in reading who fail to attend summer reading program (grades 1 through 3)
Required Individual Reading Plan for Deficient Students	Yes	Yes

OVER-IDENTIFYING MINORITY STUDENTS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION (§ 8)

The bill requires SDE to identify school districts that disproportionately or inappropriately identify minority students as requiring special education due to reading deficiencies. It requires these districts to submit annual reports to SDE describing their plan to reduce the misidentification of minority students by improving reading assessments and interventions for students in K to third grade.

Furthermore, the bill requires SDE to study the plan and strategies the districts use that demonstrate improvement in this area. The SDE study must examine the correlation between improvements in teacher training in the science of reading and the reduction in misidentification of students requiring special education services.

REQUIREMENTS FOR TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS (§§ 9, 10 & 12)

The bill requires all certified employees (i.e., teachers and administrators) working in grades K through third grade to pass the SBE-approved reading instruction exam. A teacher who does not pass must complete five hours of continuing education in reading instruction and retake the exam. A teacher who does not pass the exam on the third try, becomes ineligible to teach K through third grade and must be reassigned to another position.

It also requires:

1. teachers and administrators with elementary endorsements to have 30 rather than 15 hours of continuing education in reading instruction every five years, and
2. all special education teachers to pass the SBE reading exam to get their special education endorsement.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (§ 11)

By July 1, 2013 the bill requires the education commissioner to establish a professional development program in reading instruction for teachers.

The program will:

1. count towards the continuing education requirements,
2. be based on student reading assessment data,
3. provide differentiated and intensified training in teacher reading instruction,
4. be used to identify mentor teachers who will train teachers in reading instruction, and
5. outline how model classrooms will be established in schools for reading instruction.

The bill also requires the education commissioner to annually review the continuing education training required under law for teachers with a professional certificate who hold an early childhood nursery through third grade or elementary school endorsement and hold a job requiring such endorsement. The commissioner will assess whether the training meets state goals for student academic achievement as adopted by the SBE. He must submit his review to the Education Committee.

TEACHER AND SCHOOL INCENTIVES (§ 13)

By July 1, 2013, the commissioner must develop incentives, within available appropriations, for teachers and certain schools that demonstrate improvement in student reading in grades K through third grade.

The teacher incentives may include:

1. a master teacher designation for teachers who have significantly improved student reading skills,
2. performance bonuses, and
3. an option to delay the expiration of a teacher's certificate for those designated as a master teacher.

The commissioner must evaluate teachers under the program by measuring improvements within the school population where the teacher is employed.

The school incentives are for schools that (1) increase by 10% the number of students who meet or exceed the state-wide goal level in reading on the CMT and (2) demonstrate the methodology and instruction the school used to improve student reading skills and scores on the CMTs.

JM:ts